

It will cost \$45 million to further improve the already fully functioning port of Umm Qasr while the President is proposing zero dollars to dredge ports in my district and elsewhere in the United States because he says we cannot afford it. He is asking to borrow \$45 million and send it to Iraq to further improve their ports, but he cannot find a penny for ports in the Pacific Northwest and other parts of the United States.

It is going to cost \$150 million for a national 911 system in Iraq. Mr. Speaker, is that so they can call the next time a rogue regime uprisings? What does this have to do with the war? The American people are going to borrow \$150 million because the President wants it, send it to Iraq to give them a 911 system.

Job centers, 22 centers, \$350,000 each. If we took the \$20.3 billion the President wants this Congress to borrow and spend on behalf of rebuilding the nation of Iraq, if we matched that dollar per dollar in the United States of America, if we borrowed \$20.3 billion to rebuild the infrastructure system in the United States, we could put 1 million Americans to work in the very near future, in addition to investing in our future, our economic productivity, our ports, our highways, our water systems, our electricity grid.

It is one thing to borrow money to invest in the United States of America; it is another thing to indebt the next two generations of Americans to borrow money to spend rebuilding Iraq. Mr. Wolfowitz told us they can pay for their own reconstruction. I guess that guy made about a \$50 billion mistake that is going to cost the American taxpayers, but he is still held in highest esteem by the Bush administration. He is still working there. He is still pumping out the same mistakes. How many more billions will he cost us before the President demands his resignation. This is outrageous that the American people are being asked to borrow this money. Instead of borrowing money, investing in infrastructure and putting a million Americans to work here, he is proposing more tax cuts. His last tax cut, the dividend tax cut, returned 5 cents on the dollar to the United States economy. If it is spent on infrastructure, we get \$7 for every dollar borrowed.

Mr. Speaker, let us get our priorities straight: America first.

REPEAL DEATH GRATUITY TAX

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am back on the floor today to talk about the repeal of the death gratuity tax on the families who have given their loved ones to die for freedom in America.

Mr. Speaker, behind me are the faces of just a few of those who have died in

either Afghanistan or Iraq. In the year 2001, there were 292 families that received a bill from Uncle Sam in the way of a tax because their loved one died in uniform fighting for freedom. In the year 2002, there were 1,007 families that received a bill from Uncle Sam because their loved one died in uniform for freedom.

Already in 2003, it is well over 280 families.

Mr. Speaker, the history on this issue is that prior to 1991 or 1992, there was a \$3,000 death gratuity that was given by the government to the families whose husband or wife or daughter or son died in uniform. It could be in an accident or war situation.

□ 1500

The Congress in the early 1990s increased that from \$3,000 to \$6,000, but what happened is it did not go through the proper committee to take the tax off.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have a bill that is H.R. 693 to repeal this tax; and in fairness to the committee and to both sides, it has been supported by both sides. The committee of jurisdiction, the Committee on Ways and Means, included this language in a larger package to bring tax relief to the military, which was fine with me; but the Senate will not move the legislation. Mr. Speaker, I think it is absolutely unacceptable, deplorable that we do not take this tax off the families who are giving loved ones.

Let me show a photograph of a young boy whose name is Tyler Jordan. This was a shot in a national newspaper that I saw, and I was so touched by it that I wanted to have a copy of it. Tyler's father was a gunnery sergeant named Phillip Jordan. He was killed in Iraq. In the photograph of Tyler, he has an American flag that was taken off his father's coffin under his arms and he is looking at the father's coffin. How tragic that is within itself, but adding to that tragedy is that next year his family is going to get a bill from Uncle Sam, a bill of \$6,000, which is not enough; but we need to take this tax off so that the families who have lost loved ones will not be paying a penalty for giving the loved one who died for freedom and died for this country.

This week I received an e-mail from the father of Sergeant Jacob Frazier, and I want to read this, Mr. Speaker. It says, "Thank you for your support of H.R. 693. Our son, Sergeant Jacob Frazier, was killed in action on March 29, 2003, in Afghanistan. Upon being told we would be taxed on a portion of the \$6,000 benefit, I was shocked and insulted. My son was not married, but I am sure that there are numerous young widows that do not need another complication in their lives. Our country should not add to their burden with additional taxation. Let me know if I can do anything to help you here in Illinois to get this bill passed."

Mr. Speaker, I am going to call on the House leadership, both parties, and

ask the House leadership to please before we leave in November bring up H.R. 693, stand-alone bill. I have got many supporters from the Democratic side and the Republican side. Bring it to the floor, and let us morally do what is right for those families who have given their loved one.

Mr. Speaker, I actually wrote the President of the United States on September 17 and asked him to please use the executive office to contact the leadership in the House and the Senate, both parties, to move this legislation. In the last paragraph I wrote this sentence to the President of the United States: "Given the very little time left in this legislative session, failure to do so will result in more American military families not only giving a loved one for freedom but also suffering the unacceptable indignity of being taxed on that gift."

Mr. Speaker, we do a lot of good things around here and a lot of things we debate. We disagree, both parties and within our own parties. But this is one of those issues that it is simple. It is morally the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I close by asking God to please bless our men and women in uniform and, God, please bless America.

QUESTIONS FOR THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. McCOTTER). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, today in my e-mail I got five separate copies of an article that was put in the Atlanta Journal Constitution by a man named Max Cleland. Max Cleland is a Vietnam vet who lost his legs and one arm. He is a triple amputee, was a United States Senator, and in the last campaign they attacked him for being unpatriotic. Max is a hero in my book. The fact that he would raise questions about what the President of the United States is doing in Iraq and Afghanistan did not make him unpatriotic.

We are going to have a bill out here in a few days for \$87 billion, and the same White House is going to attack all of us if we raise any questions. Max's article starts with an erie kind of quote: "The public has been led into a trap from which it will be hard to escape with dignity and honor. They have been tricked into it by steady withholding of information. The Baghdad communiques are belated, insincere, incomplete." These "things have been far worse than we have been told, our administration more bloody and inefficient than the public knows. We are today not far from a disaster." That is a quote from a guy named T.E. Lawrence, Lawrence of Arabia, the Sunday Times of London, August 22, 1920.

The British know what they are into and they know where they have been; and if we take that quote and then ask ourselves what have we been told, we